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Grand Reopening of Helen Keller Park

Children played on swings, raced down slides, and even frolicked in the snow as the community of Athens celebrated the grand reopening of [Helen Keller Park](#) on Saturday.

Out of an abundance of caution, the seven-acre park on 1045 W. 126th Street was closed to the public in the summer of 2013, when pieces of construction debris were found embedded in the soil.

A \$5.2-million investment by Los Angeles County cleared away the environmental hazards, and installed a new playground, ball field, walking path and outdoor exercise equipment. The landscaping and south parking lot were also upgraded.

“When it comes to health and safety, we simply don’t mess around,” Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas said during the grand reopening ceremony. “We’ve taken an environmental challenge and transformed it into a state-of-the-art recreational oasis.”

The site used to be a dumping ground for construction companies until the 1940’s, prior to its acquisition by Los Angeles County. Some of the old debris was unearthed during the [\\$7.3-million renovation of the Community Center](#), which opened in late 2014.

For over a year, the Departments of Public Works and Parks and Recreation partnered with a private contractor, Environmental Construction, to replace the top layer of soil throughout the park and provide new attractions for visitors, both young and old.

Their work culminated in a grand reopening ceremony that transformed the park into a winter wonderland for a day, to the delight of local kids.

“I hope the message is clear: the Athens community deserves nothing but the best,” Supervisor Ridley-Thomas said to cheers from the crowd.

He said several projects are still in the works, including more affordable housing units, the renovation of the [Youth Activities League](#) building, and an art installation at [Woodcrest Library](#).

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